Charlie 300798*:* What to Expect

Charlie is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Charlie is a sweet and sensitive boy who is ready to find his forever home. He is timid and nervous in busy and novel environments, but once he feels safe, he loves cheek and chin scratches and will headbutt and purr with happiness.

Charlie first came to OHS in February of 2026 from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver and at that time we did not have much history on him. When Charlie arrived at OHS, he displayed fearful, shy behavior that would present itself as hissing, swatting and attempting to bite if we got too close to him. After 10 days with no change in his behavior, the decision was made to place him in our Behavior Modification program. The environment in the BMOD program is better suited at helping cats feel comfortable in a shelter environment. With the larger kennel space, access to windows, increased enrichment, and one on one time with the team we set out to learn more about him.

During his first week in BMOD, Charlie was very nervous and spent most of his time tucked away in his bed, watching us with wide, cautious eyes. If we got too close, he would cower or hide, which we understood was his way of telling us he was scared. To help him feel more comfortable, we spoke softly to him each day and left treats in his kennel so he could start building positive associations with people.

As Charlie began to realize that we weren't a threat, his body language gradually softened, and he started to relax in our presence. He became more comfortable accepting treats while we were nearby and soon began showing an interest in toys. When we introduced a wand toy, Charlie eagerly chased and pounced on it, showing just how playful he could be. By incorporating two of his favorite things, treats and toys, we helped him build positive associations with people and learn that good things happen when we are around. Before long, Charlie was welcoming gentle pets, leaning into our hands for affection, and purring contentedly.

Charlie was adopted into a home in March 2026 but was recently returned due to health concerns experienced by his adopter. They shared that Charlie was incredibly sweet and loving while in their home after giving him the time to acclimate but tended to hide when visitors came to the home. Knowing that Charlie struggles in busy, noisy environments, we welcomed him back into the BMOD program, where we could once again provide the calm, supportive environment he needs to feel secure. It only took a few days for Charlie to settle back in as we followed the same slow, patient approach that had helped him decompress before. With plenty of sweet talk, tasty treats, and engaging toys, Charlie quickly remembered that he was safe, loved, and right where he belonged.

Once Charlie feels safe with someone, he truly enjoys being pet, and will seek out attention and headbutt to show his love and appreciation. He enjoys it when staff come to visit with him and eagerly accepts pets and treats from us. Charlie can still startle easily at times if a loud noise occurs and may run off to hide, but he recovers quickly with a little verbal reassurance. He has made tremendous progress during his time here, and we believe that in the right, patient home he will continue to grow and thrive.

Though we know that Charlie originally came from a home where there were numerous other cats, Charlie has made it clear here that he is not a fan of other cats. He will hiss and growl when he sees them, so we believe he will be happiest as the only feline in his new home. Charlie would do best in a calm environment with a patient family who can give him the time and space he needs to settle in and feel comfortable.

His new family should expect that he will hide for a few weeks, possibly longer. You'll need to introduce him to new things slowly. Charlie typically flees, hisses and swats when overwhelmed or scared. It's important to provide him with a small room with appropriate hiding spots for him to relax in, such as his own hidey bed. Hiding spots that are confined to a tight spot and out of reach from you will make it difficult to build a bond with him. The room you set him up in will be the catalyst for how quickly he acclimates. Start thinking now which room in your home would be best for Charlie to settle into. If it's a bedroom, can he get under the bed or dresser making it difficult to spend time with him? If it's a laundry room or bathroom will the constant in and out of people and noises associated with these rooms be too much for him? By having a room without a lot of foot traffic and with appropriate hiding spots, it will allow you to work on building a relationship. While in his hiding spot, use calm voices and offer tasty treats to show you are not a threat. Place a small amount of wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Charlie while in his hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Charlie will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Charlie during your first months together:

This step is crucial in helping Charlie acclimate to his new home. Confine Charlie to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Charlie with a litter box, food, water, and a bed. Ensure he cannot get to ***inappropriate*** hiding spots (under the bed, in a closet, on top of a cabinet, etc.). Provide him with a safe, comfortable hiding place instead like his cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket.

Spend time with Charlie in his room. Don't force him out of his hiding spot. Instead, encourage him to come out on his own using happy talk, offering a toy or treats. Once he is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to interact with you, you can start introducing him to the rest of your home. Start by propping the door open and allowing him to come out on his own. Don't force it! If you come across something that you can tell Charlie is worried about, allow him to hang back or hide if he chooses to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Charlie has started exploring the rest of the house, give him a safe space that he can retreat to. When he is in his safe space, insist that guests leave him alone and try to ignore him yourself. That way, when he comes out, you can reward his bravery with your attention.

No visitors (at first). Allow Charlie time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing him to new people. When you have visitors over, give Charlie the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore him – or if Charlie seems curious or interested, have the new person toss his treats or offer a favorite toy. We want exciting, good things to come from new people.

Practice crate training. Leave his carrier out all the time, so it's just a part of his normal environment. Add a bed and keep the door securely propped open so he can go in and out on his own, making sure the door won't swing shut and frighten him. You can also clicker train his to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Charlie get comfortable with his carrier will make it easier when it's time to visit the vet.

Visiting the vet: Unless it's an emergency, give Charlie time to bond to you before taking his to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if he already trusts you, your presence may help him feel more comfortable.

Patience will come in handy for you. Charlie is a cat that needs an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow him to adapt in his own time. He may never be a social butterfly, and that's okay! Getting to know him and watching him come out of his hell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

We're here to help!

We want Charlie to be successful in his new home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. Call the Behavior helpline at (503)416-2983 or email the BMOD cat trainers at bmodcat@oregonhumane.org to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification department.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you and Charlie now and in the future. Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns – or just to give an update. We love to see photos and hear how our friends are doing!

Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new cat!